

Plight of Sikhs

By : Giani Brahma Singh, Ajmer

One has to feel ashamed of being an Indian when thousands of Hindus went around killing Sikhs in November last for no fault of theirs other than belonging to another faith. And, worse, they were allowed to do so with impunity.

Should one think all this was a pre-meditated conspiracy?

There are Hindus whose parents had suffered together with Sikhs during country's vivisection in 1947. Now these Hindus are in majority and have turned bigots. They are drunk with political power. Under instigation, they became torturers, murderers, butchers and incinerators of Sikh men, women, children, rich and poor alike, reducing to ashes their dwellings, factories and shops, and looting goods worth crores of rupees. They carried petrol and kerosene cans and lit torches. Brandishing their weapons, crude or sophisticated they shouted: "Des kay Sikho Bharat Chhoro"; "Sikh maaro, Hindu bachhao"; "Khoon ka badla khoon hai". (O Indian Sikhs, leave Bharat; Kill Sikhs, save Hindus; Avenge Blood for

Blood.)

Even the cavalcade of country's president, Giani Zail Singh, was mercilessly stoned in the precincts of All-India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, merely because he was a Sikh. He had gone there to see the slain prime minister Indira Gandhi. His Sikh driver had a providential escape by manoeuvring to conceal his turban.

Entire Sikh constabulary in the Indian capital 20 p.c. of the Police force, was withdrawn from active duty, may be to give a free hand to the miscreants to indulge in indiscriminate destruction of everything Sikh.

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, realising his responsibility to protect citizens' life and property, was keen to call out the army on the very first evening to quell the riots and stop the killings and arson. But he was advised by his Home Minister P.V. Narsimha Rao to wait for a while.

How long and why?

Mrs. Indira Gandhi's phy-

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sical and charismatic presence maintained the illusion of a government in existence when, in fact, there was none. This had been more than enough corroborated by the barbaric happenings throughout the length and breadth of the country for four days when anti-Sikh elements staged dances of death everywhere. . . in streets, on roads, in trains, on railway platforms, in buses, on bus stops, in Gurdwaras, in Sikh schools, in towns, in villages. In place of a civilised government, barbarity reigned supreme.

It was reminiscent of Guru Nanak's lament enshrined in the Adi Granth when this prophet of mankind saw with his own eyes, in 1521, Babar's invading hordes, mowing down mercilessly vanquished Ibrahim Lodhi's army consisting of both Muslims and Hindus. He said:

*Eitee maar payee kurlaanay,
tain kee darad na aayeya*

(Didst Thou, O Lord, feel no pain when Thou witnesseth such enormity of rapine and murder of Thy herd.)

But now here the true shepherd Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, was afflicted later with pernicious and vicious nations of "Blood for blood", "Sikhs should be taught a lesson", "Hindus' tolerance should not be mistaken for weakness". He had little time to look after the safety and security of the life and property of the Sikhs. . . "a tribal and inimical segment of the country," fit only for being cajoled to be fodder for the enemy guns whenever Bharat Mata's freedom is in peril.

Many would agree that after the Bluestar Operation, Mrs. Gandhi always looked jittery and disturbed. In every public or private gathering she vehemently emphasised justification of her action perhaps to clear her guilty conscience. She harangued that army action against the Golden Temple was simply to flush out the terrorists and to re-establish sanctity of the holy Sikh shrine. It was never against the Sikh community at large.

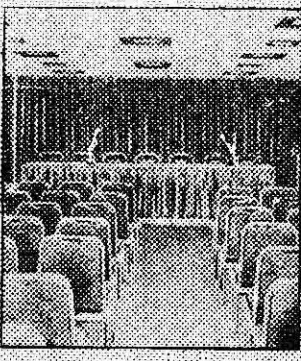
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no opportunity to harm the entire Sikh people, both physically and psychologically, and to inject panic into them at least for two generations to come.

The new government of her son, Rajiv Gandhi, has failed to rehabilitate the lost confidence of this important minority who has nowhere else to go. To be traitors is not in their blood. It may not be an immature thinking that had Mrs. Gandhi lived her natural span of life, she would have overtly felt contrite for invading the holy shrine and burning hundreds of copies of Guru Granth Sahib. The idea that, in a way, this was a kind of war with her own people, had been nibbling at the core of her conscience.

It is a political verity that small groups of terrorists or extremists do exist in all countries, and India cannot be an exception. They generally enjoy support from local leaders. Muslim extremists exist in Kashmir; Christian extremists flourish in Mizoram and in areas around it; Hindu terrorists and extremists are plaguing Assam for over half a decade and they are also active in Tamil Nadu. All of them have anti-national nexus with bordering Pakistan, China and Sri Lanka. But only a full-fledged war was declared on so-called Sikh extremists in Punjab.

Why?

It is a historical assessment, admitted by great Mughals themselves, that if they had not been terrorising Nanak-Panthi Hindus, there could have been no birth of Sikh militancy, and Islamic butchers would have continued devouring the Vedic religion.

Sikhs were born for the protection of Hindu Dharma. This has been more than once proclaimed by supreme Hindu authorities, including Jagadguru Shankracharya and Rashtriya Sewak Sangh chief. But the paradox here is that the field is eating its own protecting hedge.

I would earnestly appeal as an old law-abiding Sikh, to all my countrymen including educationists, writers and poets, bureaucrats and accredited leaders of the political parties, members of parliament and assemblies and, above all, to the new Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and his colleagues to devise ways and means, sans any delay, for rehabilitation of the lost confidence of the Sikh minority. This is the result of the recent holocaust. Sikhs should be enabled, as equal partners as hitherto, to share fully all nation-building activities.

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nor secessionists. To dub them as such is sheer mischief. It amounts to throwing down the drain their supreme sacrifices for the motherland, especially since 1871 when 91 Kuka Sikhs were blown to bits by British guns, followed by deportation and exile of Baba Ram Singh for waging war against the British Monarch. The Sikhs have made more sacrifices for the country than any other community.

The central government must appoint a high-level judicial commission to ferret out the guilty of genocide of Sikhs and to expel the sense of fear and insecurity from the psyche of the wronged community. It must compensate them for the losses they have suffered because of the failure of administrative machinery and help build up their economy.



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